The One Who has Gone Astray.

The day hath been full of blessing,
And mercy hath kept thy way;
But fast in the gloom are passing
The feet which have gone astray.

There are sorrow and joy before thee,
The soul shall rest as a child's.
The angel of God are over thee—
But oh! the soul in the wilds!

Turn, turn from thy evil sweet vision,
And tenderly kiss and pray,
God, watch from the height Elysian
The one who has gone astray!

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Talks with Girls.

BY ZENETH JUNE.

"HIGHER" EDUCATION.

TRADER once went to a mechanic, and said to him:
"What tools can you make that will suit my customers?"

The mechanic showed him knives, hammers, chisels, augers, gravers, and others.

"Those are all very well," said the trader, "and very good of their kind, but my customers are peculiar; they complain of knives because they are too long, or too sharp, or will only do the one thing; they complain of hammers because they are too hard, and too heavy, and useless except to drive nails, and gravers 'put too fine a point upon everything.' Can you not make a tool that is neither too long, nor too short, nor too light, nor too heavy, nor too sharp, nor too dull; that will do many things, do them all well, he besides pretty to look at, and last a life time?"

The mechanic shook his head. "You will have to go to some more skillful workman than I am," replied he. "I cannot undertake to make such a tool."

It is precisely such contradictory results as these that the majority of people expect to accomplish by modern, or as it is technically called, "higher" education. When a potter undertakes to decorate his vases, the design, the cost, the finish of the work bear close relation to the quality of the body part of the object, and its refinement by previous processes. But we do not think of this in the education we bestow upon our children: we seem to consider them really mere sheets of white paper upon which anything can be written, instead of living, breathing, human organisms possessed of certain qualities and faculties, in greater or less degree, which must be improved and cultivated in the line of the uses for which their nature evidently designed them.

What is the use of keeping a girl from two to six hours of the day at the piano, who has neither ear, nor voice, nor love of music, and cannot tell harmony from discord? What is the use of a girlstraining brain and nerve over the intricate data and minute calculations of geology and astronomy, whose mathematical processes are strongly connected with the difficulties of even so small a thing as the multiplication table?

Music is one of the charms of existence, but it has been brought to great perfection, and can be had of the best by the expenditure of a dollar now and then, while an inferior kind, obtained at the lavish and vast cost of money which could have been so much more satisfactorily bestowed upon other things, is bad economy, besides showing a want of sense.

There was a time when a little smattering of this, that and the other was thought necessary to render a girl attractive and desirable in society. But this is past, such an one is now considered a nuisance, and her jingling on the piano, her faint water-color sketches, or her little schmaltzy attempts at drawing, find their level because they will not bear comparison with the work of those who have taken the direction and devoted time, labor, patience and money to the perfecting of the one thing in which they excel.

A universal genius who can do all things, and do them all well, is a very remarkable person, but he would not be likely to acquire fame or fortune. Public opinion finds its expression in the old adage, "A jack at all trades is a master of none." Any ordinary life-time does not admit of the cultivation of all arts, all trades, or all professions with equal, or even with satisfactory results, to do a thing well, or even so that we can compete with others, or earn a livelihood at it, we must devote nearly all our strength, and all our efforts to it, and keep on doing so, or we shall be left behind. But perhaps it might be as well to inquire what the modern, or "higher" education consists of that is supposed to form the "open sesame" for our girls to all honors, all distinctions, all happiness, all those that are in any way desirable in after life. It is simply the same dose in a mild form that boys have been in the habit of taking; the nearer it approaches the original in strength, and in the nature of its ingredients the more perfect it is supposed to be. But what does the school education which boys get do for them? Are they ready to enter the world, and fight its battles when they leave school? Are they even prepared as a general thing to earn a livelihood? The universal answer will be, "no." Then why should we expect a dilation of this same amount, a little Greek, a little Latin, a little of the old hog Latin, the little of the "higher" mathematics, a little school philosophy, a little French, a little German, a little history (very much mixed), a little botany perhaps, and so on through the whole category, or as it is called, "higher," in the "curriculum," to become the all in all for our girls?

What can a girl do more than a boy with these little puddles of learning, which could they be put together might form one respectable stream, but isolated as they are and must be necessarily are scarcely large enough to afford a place for even ducks to swim?
"Then would you have girls relinquish their chances for a more complete education?"

Certainly not: I would only have it complete, and thorough as far as it goes, and use discrimination in regard to the studies into which a girl must put several of the most important years of her life. If she has a taste for scholarship, and can afford to indulge it, all that she is to impart will be a source of pleasure and will assist to broaden her ideas, enlarge her capacity, and fill her life with noble purpose. But if her fate is that of the majority of women, if she must leave school to earn her own livelihood, to perform practical every-day duties, to become a wife, and the mother of children, it is more important that her education should have something to do with these matters than that she should have learned a little Greek, which was never put to use before it was forgotten, or been able to state in technical terms, the reply to a mathematician, or make her head ache, and which she never afterward thought of, except to be glad that there was no longer any necessity to perform a task so hateful.

It is not that our girls are too well educated, but that a system, flexible, yet strong, and adaptable to requirements has not yet been worked out. All that has been done is to add, as far as to follow feebly in the well-worn track of the young men. A college that enforces precisely the same course of study for girls that is demanded of boys, and subjects them to the same kind of examinations, is valued as the only true and honest one, the college, emphatically of the future. This is a great mistake. Such a school is good, that is to say, it is much better than none at all, but girls do not want the same advanced training as boys; from a certain age, say fourteen or fifteen, their thirst for knowledge, and their preparation for the work of the life which lies before them, should differ also.

The period of their lives when both sexes can naturally and advantageously receive the same training is in their youth. If girls from the time of birth were dressed, fed, taught, and brought up sensibly and healthily as boys, their whole future lives would be benefited by it, but they are "cribbed, cabined, and confined"—restricted in a thousand different ways up to the period of adolescence, and then, with weaker bodies and less knowledge of methods, they are set to compete with boys on their own ground, ground which they are never again to occupy after the season of contest is over. Does not this seem unfair, not to say absurd?

With boys, physical development goes hand in hand with mental use and exercise, and if we are going to impress upon girls the same tasks that we set boys, the least we can do is to make their early training and preparation in all essential respects the same; while, if we choose to diverge at a proper point, and adapt their later studies to the duties they will be called upon to perform, we must direct them better for the freedom, and the helps to a larger and more perfect growth, physically and mentally, which they will have gained in their childhood.

In some respects a good "old-fashioned" education was better than that which our girls' graduates get now; it was better in so far as that it did not unfit young women for the place they have to occupy, the work they have to do. It was better in that it taught some things thoroughly, so that they were not heard and forgotten, but became a part of the pupil's life, and assisted in the molding of character. Not that we need to go back to the working apprentices, or confine the multiplication table "enough arithmetic for a woman," but would it not be well to consider what life in all probability holds for us, and prepare to perform the duties of women, rather than neglect the preparation required for those, to acquire a mastery of that knowledge of abstract lore, which men are beginning to think time wasted in the acquiring, when other and more pressing interests are sacrificed to it?

The argument so frequently maintained that the studies of Greek, and of the more intricate problems in mathematics are valuable as discipline to the mind, has great force, but why select those subjects either because they are the capacity of the mind to put to use, or hindrances in the way of the thorough acquisition of more necessary branches of learning? The modern languages, physiology, chemistry, natural history, botany, are all disciplining and illuminating subjects, different in matters of degree from those of mere knowledge, and if they are pursued closely, and with such attention as ultimate mastery requires. Yet all these are particularly useful and practical, studies, subjects that have to do with every-day life and growth, and that every woman therefore should be informed upon, that she may know how to take care of her own child, and others, and make her children acquainted with themselves, and their relations to the world about them.

I am not endeavoring to deprecate, or depreciate knowledge of any kind, it is all good, if it is obtained from the love of it, and made a means of usefulness to others. A woman who can devote herself to the acquisition of the most abstract learning, for the purpose of becoming a teacher, or shaping her life in accordance with her tastes and wishes, claims respect, and the consideration which we accord to any life devoted to the service of others. But it is far better known that scholarly men, and life-long students, while often invaluable in giving their services to the elucidation of some questions in science, are not fitted by nature or education for dealing with practical details, or working out the social and domestic problems that so often fall to the lot of women; while they insist on the ordinary Mary Jane puzzling her head over profound theories in regard to past ages, or future destinies, would be to spoil a good sensible girl, by attempting to make of her a saint.

What we need to do is to reconsider the whole subject of "higher education," and make up our minds that it does not merely or mainly refer to the higher departments of certain technical studies, but to thoroughness and capacity in every branch of study which is taken up. Whatever a girl is, her life is to be her own, whether she may be a lady, or a laborer, or a woman of honor, but she may know twenty things superficially, and they will neither bring her credit, nor enable her to be of use to herself or others. Let us drop the term "higher education," which means nothing, which at best is only comparative, and take up the better word, thorough education, and of, and for our daughters, that instead of wasting their time over what is useless to them, they shall spend it in acquiring an exact knowledge of such things as they need, of such things as will develop, instead of repress, their natural faculties, and make of them useful, honest, conscientious, and honorable women.

What is needed to-day more than anything else is the world, is good, able, willing, true-hearted, and single-minded girls and women, who know how to perform all the duties which belong to the different relations of life, and execute them well and cheerfully, whether it be in the kitchen, the shop, the office, the nursery, at the desk, or working the sewing-machine. Moreover, let us do our duty without drawing comparisons, with no evidence of inferiority, with no desire to prove them right or wrong, only to show that they are not less devoted, nor less able, nor less willing to do our best, no matter what happens. Death itself is a small matter compared with the loss of our own self-respect, compared even with the neglect to improve to the utmost the opportunities afforded us by the exercise and development of our highest powers and faculties.

Nor is it essential that those should be expended upon problems in Euclid, or questions in metaphysics. Life and health depend upon the way our food is prepared, upon the reasonableness, character of our clothing, upon the routine of our daily habits. All these are controlled by women, not the women who work outside their homes, but those who perform the domestic duties at home and carefully superintend their performance. It is well certainly to bring all the knowledge we can acquire to bear upon the common work of daily life; but the work must be done, and it is better to do it conscientiously, adding to our store of actual information as we can, rather to spend years in acquiring superficial knowledge, which only inflates our vanity, and makes us feel superior to the practical work we are left to do. This and all the other obligations that lie before us. We learn not to resent the tasks that are laid before us, but to improve ourselves, enlarging our ideas, and modifying our standard of values, second in the use we can make of it for the benefit of others. This use is not confined to teaching them what we know, it is expressed in every act of our lives, in the unconscious ministry of a keener intelligence, a finer manner, more suitable, and sensible dress, less trivial conversation, more refined taste, and a subdued, less obtrusive personality.

Consciously it will be directed toward the discovery of the best methods of applying our every-day work, whatever that may be, whether cooking, writing, teaching, sewing, or all of them by turn, for women generally have duties of many kinds.

The definition of higher education then must be, what brings together all of them if it stops at "reading, writing, and arithmetic."" No more of shaving the entire surface, master a study, if it is only one at a time, and make proficiency, not the number of studies, the test of advance in education.